

Message Text

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INFO ZEN/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

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AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ATHENS 4426

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, GR, XH

SUBJ: EASTERN BLOC ACTIVITIES IN NORTHERN GREECE

REF: A. THESSALONIKI 300

B. THESSALONIKI 310

C. THESSALONIKI 288

D. THESSALONIKI A-08, MAY 28, 1975

E. ATHENS 3968

THIS IS A REPEAT OF THESSALONIKI 344: FOLLOWING REPRESENTS OUR COLLECTED THOUGHTS ON HEIGHTENED EASTERN BLOC ACTIVITY IN THIS AREA OVER PAST SIX MONTHS.

1. SUMMARY. DRAMATIC INCREASE IN EASTERN BLOC ACTIVITY IN NORTHERN GREECE IN PAST HALF YEAR SHOULD, WE BELIEVE, BE VIEWED IN LIGHT OF VIRTUALLY COMPLETE ABSENCE OF COMMUNIST PRESENCE HERE DURING PRECEDING 8 YEARS. MOREOVER, LOCAL COMMUNIST BLOC ACTIVITIES UNDOUBTEDLY LOOM LARGER IN CONSERVATIVE AND SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE OF THESSALONIKI. IT PROBABLY
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INEVITABLE THAT, GIVEN MORE RECEPTIVE CLIMATE CURRENTLY

PREVAILING IN GREECE, NEARBY COUNTRIES SUCH AS BULGARIA AND ROMANIA WOULD SEEK ACTIVELY TO PROMOTE COMMERCIAL AND OTHER INTERESTS IN THIS STRATEGIC AREA. THEIR EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD RECEIVE STRONG IMPETUS FROM PRESENT GOG OBJECTIVE OF "REGIONAL NORMALIZATION" (REF E) AS RECENTLY EVIDENCED IN CARAMANLIS' JOURNEYS TO ROMANIA AND YUGOSLAVIA, HIS IMMINENT TRIP TO BULGARIA, AND A FLURRY OF LOWER LEVEL BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS OF THE GOG WITH BALKAN OFFICIALS. RECOGNIZING THESE CONTRIBUTIVE FACTORS, ACCELERATION OF COMMUNIST-BLOC ACTIVITIES IN THIS AREA NONETHELESS REMAINS IMPRESSIVE AND BEARS FURTHER SURVEILLANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL: COMMUNIST BLOC EFFORTS TO REASSERT INFLUENCE AND COMMERCIAL PRESENCE IN NORTHERN GREECE EXPLINT NEW POLITICAL CLIMATE AND PERCEPTIBLE INCREASE IN LEFTIST STRENGTH WHICH CONGEN HAS NOTED OVER PAST YEAR. LATER IS UNDOUBTEDLY OVERREACTION, PARTICULARLY AMONG UNIVERSITY AND STUDENT ELEMENTS, TO SUPPRESSION OF THE JUNTA YEARS. DISPLAYS IN MOST LOCAL BOOKSHOPS, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE DOMINATED BY GREEK LANGUAGE MATERIALS OF EVERY LEFTIST AND COMMUNIST PERSUASION. SIMILARLY, LEFTIST SPEAKERS ARE IN OBVIOUS VOGUE AT UNIVERSITY, SUCH AS LEADER OF FRENCH BRANCH OF FOURTH INTERNAL, ALAIN KRIVINE, WHO DELIVERED TWO LECTURES MAY 23-24 ON "SOCIALIST REVOLUTION" AND "PORTUGAL".

3. MORE SERIOUS MANIFESTATION OF COMMUNIST STRENGTH AT LOCAL LEVEL IS ELECTION OF LEFTIST THESSALONIKI MAYOR PAPADOPOULOS AND MUNICIPAL COUNCIL WHICH INCLUDES A NUMBER OF KNOWN COMMUNISTS, ONE OF WHOM WAS ELECTED COUNCIL PRESIDENT JUNE 8. SIMILAR PATTERN ALSO TRUE IN THESSALONIKI SUBURBS AND KEY CENTERS OF NORTHERN GREECE. ALSO CAUSE FOR CONCERN IS REPORTED RELAXATION OF GOG POLICY ON REPATRIATION OF GREEKS FROM EASTERN EUROPE, A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF WHICH EMIGRATED FROM NORTHERN GREECE.

4. IN COMMERCIAL AREA, THE GOG HAS CALLED FOR INCREASED TRADE WITH EASTERN EUROPE. THE ANNUAL THESSALONIKI FAIR APPEARS TO BE EVOLVING INTO A SHOWCASE FOR BLOC MERCHANDISE AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE, WHILE OTHER COUNTRIES, OURSELVES
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INCLUDED, ARE FORCED BY RISING EXHIBIT COSTS AND COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES ELSEWHERE TO A MORE MODEST PRESENCE.

5. REGARDING THE STEP-UP IN BLOC CULTURAL PROGRAMS, THE RATHER MODEST AUDIENCES FOR BULGARIAN CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS HAVE BEEN GATHERED THROUGH INVITATION WITH THE TICKETS USUALLY GRATIS. THERE HAVE BEEN EAST GERMAN PROGRAMS WITH MORE COMMERCIAL ENTERTAINMENT APPEAL WHICH HAVE BEEN FULLY

BOOKED THROUGH TICKET SALES. ON THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS,
BLOC COUNTRIES' FILMS AND PROGRAMS ARE PLACED THROUGH
COOPERATION WITH SPECIAL INTERESTS' STUDENT CLUBS -
FILMS, DRAMA, SCIENCE. COMMUNITY AND CAMPUS CULTURAL
AND FRIENDSHIP SOCIETIES HAVE NOT AS YET BEEN ACTIVATED
TO SERVE AS A FORUM OR CONDUIT FOR BLOC CULTURAL PROGRAMMING.
GREEK LANGUAGE RADIO PROGRAMMING, PRIMARILY OF AN ENTERTAIN-
MENT NATURE, FROM SKOPJE AND SOFIA, AND ENGLISH BROADCASTING
FROM TIRANA WITH OBVIOUS IDEOLOGICAL THEMES, ARE THE LONG-
5-,\$8,& ?-:(&497,\$ 59 5#3 :7443,5 08:(-UP IN CULTURAL
PRESENTATIONS IN THE NORTH OF GREECE.

6. FOLLOWING ON A COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY BASIS IS A SUMMARY
OF RECENT COMMUNIST INITIATIVES HERE IN THESSALINIKI. BULGARIANS
HAVE BEEN BY ALL ODDS MOST ACTIVE AND, WE BELIEVE WITH SOVIET BACKING
AND POSSIBLY GUIDANCE, APPEAR TO BE SPEARHEADING BLOC
EFFORTS TO INCREASE LOCAL PRESENCE. OTHER COUNTRIES SUCH
AS POLAND, WHICH BUILT AND SUPERVISES OPERATION OF
SUGAR REFINERIES AT SERRES, XANTHI AND ORESTIAS, HAVE NOT
NOTABLY INCREASED PRESENCE AND ARE NOT INCLUDED BELOW.

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7. BULGARIA: MOST ACTIVE OF BLOC COUNTRIES HERE, BULGARIA ESTABLISHED CONSULATE GENERAL IN THESSALONIKI IN JANUARY 1974 AND HAS SPONSORED SERIES OF HIGH LEVEL DELEGATION IN 1975. LATTER INCLUDE VISITS BY BULGARIAN TRADE UNDER SECRETARY CHRISTOV JANUARY 19, TRANS-PORT UNDER SECRETARY FERDOV FEBRUARY 8-11, UNDER SECRE-TARY OF MINES ZAPRENOV FEBRUARY 16, ARCHBISHOP NICOLAI MAKAROPOLSKY APPROXIMATELY MAY 5-15, AND PATRIARCH MAXIMOS WHO RECENTLY VISITED THESSALONIKI, KATERINI AND MOUNT ATHOS WITH LARGE RETINUE AS PART OF PUBLICIZED MAY 28-JUNE 4 VISIT TO GREECE. BOTH OF LATTER ARE REPORTEDLY INTERESTED IN AUGMENTING NUMBER OF EASTERN (SLAVIC) ORTHODOX MONKS AT MT. ATHOS, WHICH ORIGINALLY BROACHED DURING OCTOBER 1972 VISIT BY RUSSIAN PATRIARCH PIMEN.

8. ON COMMERCIAL SIDE, BULGARIAN EXPANSION STIMULATED BY FEBRUARY 13 AGREEMENT FOR INCREASING TRANSIT TRADE THROUGH PORT OF THESSALONIKI AND UPGRADING OF THESS-LONIKI-KULATA RAILWAY. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, BULGARIANS ALSO SIGNED AGREEMENT FEBRUARY 19 WITH HELLENIC STEEL FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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INITIAL \$9 MILLION EXCHANGE OF SEMI-PROCESSED COILS FOR FINISHED PRODUCTS AND ARE EXPLORING POSSIBLE CONSTRUCTION OF ALUMINUM PROCESSING PLANT IN XANTHI AREA TO PROMOTE LINKAGE OF TWO COUNTRIES' POWER GRIDS. IN THIS CONNECTION, CONGEN SLAVCHEV NOTED TO ME (I.E. BRENNAN) THAT APPROXIMATELY 45 PERCENT OF BULGARIAN-GREEK TRADE IS CONDUCTED IN NORTH, AND BULGARIANS WILL SOON ESTABLISH TWO-MAN COMMERCIAL OFFICE HERE. BULGARIAN OFFICIALS ARE TALKING ABOUT A POSSIBLE INCREASE IN THEIR TONNAGE HANDLED THROUGH THESSALONIKI FROM A PROJECTED 400,000 TONS ANNUALLY IN 1975 TO THREE MILLION TONS BY 1978.

9. IN ADDITION, BULGARIANS ATTEMPTING TO PENETRATE CULTURAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE HERE WITH REGULAR VISITS AND PRESENTATIONS. FOR EXAMPLES, LOCAL CONGEN STAGED ELABORATE (BUT PAINFUL) MUSICAL PROGRAM MAY 22, AND SOFIA FOLK BALLET WHICH BEGAN TWO WEEK RUN HERE MAY 31 TO APRIL CONGEN SLAVCHEV HOSTED COSTLY RECEPTION AND FILM SHOWING AT LEADING DOWNTOWN HOTEL ATTENDED BY RANKING LOCAL DIGNITARIES, INCLUDING MINISTER FOR NORTHERN GREECE, TO PROMOTE GREEK TOURISM IN BULGARIA. PROGRAM FOR 20TH WORLD VETERINARY CONGRESS HERE JULY 6-12 ALSO INDICATES DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH BULGARIAN PRESENCE AMONG PARTICIPANTS AND SPEAKERS.

10. ACTIVITIES ABOVE COORDINATED BY 6-7 MAN STAFF HEADED BY SLAVCHEV, WHO FLUENT IN GREEK, VETERAN OF MORE THAN FOUR YEARS AT ATHENS EMBASSY, AND AMONG MOST ACTIVE MEMBERS OF

LOCAL CONSULAR CORPS. AS EXAMPLE, SLAVCHEV MADE SPECIAL CALL ON MINISTER FOR NORTHERN GREECE MARTIS TO PROMOTE USE OF TWO BULGARIAN FILMS DURING LOCAL MAY 24-JUNE 1 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WEEK. SLAVCHEV ALSO ATTEMPTING TO PURCHASE LOT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW 8-FLOOR SHOWCASE CONSULATE BUILDING, PRESUMABLY TO INCLUDE RESIDENCES AND NEW COMMERCIAL OFFICES.

11. EAST GERMANY: EAST GERMAN PRESENCE LED BY FIRST LOCAL VISIT ON APRIL 28-29 OF AMBASSADOR KUBE (REF A), WHO PROMISED VARIETY OF MUSICAL EVENTS HERE INCLUDING EAST GERMAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA DURING AUGUST 1975, AND VARIOUS CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS. LATTER INCLUDE GDR FILM CONFIDENTIAL

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FESTIVAL, OPENED AT LOCAL THEATER MAY 12 BY CULTURAL ATTACHE HAASE, AND PHOTO AND DESIGN EXHIBIT ON CONTEMPORARY GDR THEATER AT UNIVERSITY POLYTECHNIC SCHOOL MAY 19-26. FILMS SHOWN DURING FESTIVAL INCLUDED DOCUMENTARY ON CHILE, LIFE OF ROSA LUXEMBOURG, AND "LIFE OF ANARACHIST".

12. YUGOSLAVIA: PRINCIPAL NEW YUGOSLAV INITIATIVE HERE WAS MAY 2-6 VISIT TO THESSALONIKI BY COMMUNIST PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL DONALTS (PHONETIC), WHO REPORTEDLY IS SECOND RANKING GOY OFFICIAL AFTER TITO; PARLIAMENT PRESIDENT GLEGOROV (PHONETIC) AND PM OF SKOPJE GOV POPOV (PHONETIC). VISIT, WHICH INCLUDED CALLS OF MINISTER FOR NORTHERN GREECE MARTIS AND OTHER LOCAL OFFICIALS, WAS DESCRIBED TO US BY GREEK OFFICIALS AS "GOODWILL TOUR", BUT MAY HAVE INCLUDED DISCUSSION OF SENSITIVE MACEDONIAN ISSUE. ON COMMERCIAL SIDE, WE HAVE NOTED NO DIMINUTION OF YUGOSLAV SHIPPING HERE FOLLOWING FEBRUARY 4 TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT FOR EXCLUSIVE YUGOSLAV FREE PORT.

13. CZECHOSLOVAKIA: PRESENCE OF CZECHS, WHO HAVE NO PERMANENT REPRESENTATION HERE, NOTED IN TWO COMMEERCIAL DELEGATIONS. SPECIALIZED DELEGATION TO INVESTIGATE ASBESTOS, CHROME AND OTHER ORES, VISITED EDESSA AREA IN EARLY MARCH, AND AGREEMENT IS REPORTEDLY PENDING FOR CZECH EXPLOITATION OF THESE MINERALS. MORE SUBSTANTIAL 10-MAN DELEGATION HEADED BY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT L. CERNY VISITED THESSALONIKI MAY 15, BUT LOCAL OFFICIALS REPORT THAT MISSION'S TIME HERE WAS TOO SHORT FOR SERIOUS BUSINESS.

14. USSR: OVERT SOVIET PRESENCE HERE LIMITED TO RECENT VISITS BY AMBASSADOR YESOV AND EMBASSY OFFICIALS. AS REPORTED REF B, YESOV LAID WREATH MAY 15 AT LOCAL GRAVES OF ALLEGED SOVIET WORLD WAR II DEAD, FOLLOWING SIMILAR CEREMONY HERE BY FOUR EMBASSY OFFICERS MARCH 1 FOR RED

ARMY DAY. AS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, SOVIET OFFICIALS
BEGAN MAY VISIT WITH EXTENDED CONSULTATION AT BULGARIAN
CONGEN. ACCORDING TO SOVIET COUNSELOR, USSR ALSO CON-
SIDERING ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSULATE GENERAL IN THESSA-
LINIKI AND COMMERCIALY, SOVIET REPRESENTATIVE GOUROV MADE
EXTENDED VISIT DURING DECEMBER, OSTENSIBLY TO
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EXPLORE SOVIET PURCHASES OF LOCAL TOBACCO, FRUIT,
WINE AND FOOTWEAR, AS REPORTED EARLIER, SOVIET PROJECT
FOR ENERGY PLANT AT PHILIPPI HAS BEEN SCRAPPED, BUT
USSR LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED IN ALTERNATE PROPOSAL SUCH
AS PTOLEMAI'S LIGNITE EXPLOITATION. CONGEN HAS ALSO
NOTED, BUT DOES NOT HAVE CONCLUSIVE FIGURES ON,
EXPANDED SOVIET SHIPPING THROUGH LOCAL PORT.

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15. ROMANIA: WHILE ROMANIAN PRESENCE IN NORTH SO FAR

LIMITED TO SINGLE COMMERCIAL REPRESENTATIVE, REQUEST FOR UPGRADING LOCAL TRADE MISSION TO CONSULATE GENERAL STATUS IS PENDING. SENIOR GREEK SECURITY OFFICER INFORMED US MAY 28 THAT ARRANGEMENT FOR CONGEN HERE AND RECIPROCAL GREEK MISSION IN CONSTANTA WAS PROBABLY INCLUDED IN ACCORD SIGNED PREVIOUS DAY BY PM CARAMANLIS IN BUCHAREST. APRIL 15 GREEK-ROMANIAN TRADE AGREEMENT IS ALSO EXPECTED TO RESULT IN INCREASED ROMANIAN USE OF EXPANDED FREE ZONE HERE.

16. COMMENT: AS NOTED ABOVE, WE SEE THESE ACTIVITIES AS PART OF PREDICTABLE COMMUNIST EFFORT TO ESTABLISH PRESENCE ON NORTHERN GREEK SCENE FOLLOWING OVERTHROW OF JUNTA. WHILE THIS REPRESENTS A QUANTUM JUMP IN LEVEL OF COMMUNIST ACTIVITY, IT IS THUS FAR WELL SHORT OF MASSIVE PENETRATION. NONETHELESS, IT IS CAUSE FOR INCREASING CONCERN AMONG MANY CONSERVATIVE NORTHERNERS WHO RECALL HISTORIC SLAV INTEREST IN AEGEAN OUTLET AND RETAIN SHARP PERSONAL MEMORIES OF CIVIL WAR. WHILE WE
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BELIEVE LOCAL BLOC PRESENCE WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE, PARTICULARLY IN COMMERCIAL AREA, THERE SEEM TO BE DEFINITE LIMITS TO DEGREE OF INFLUENCE WHICH THEY MAY BE PERMITTED TO ATTAIN UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS. IN RECENT PRIVATE CONVERSATION. POLITICALS AFFAIRS ADVISER TO MINISTER FOR NORTHERN GREECE CONFIDED THAT GOG AND MINISTRY FULLY AWARE OF GROWING COMMUNIST PRESENCE IN THIS AREA AND KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON IT. ONE POSITIVE INDICATION IS REPORT FROM RELIABLE SOURCE THAT LOCAL POLICE HAVE ALREADY ACTED TO BLOCK BULGARIAN PURCHASE OF PROPERTY FOR CONGEN BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN HARBOR SECTOR OF CITY. ALTHOUGH THE NEW MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WITH LEFTIST SYMPATHIES MIGHT OFFER THEIR GOOD OFFICES TO OVERCOME THE POLICE OBJECTIONS, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT THEY WILL NOT, PREFERRING TO ACCEPT THE SECURITY CONSIDERATION AS THE OVERRIDING INTEREST. ALTHOUGH ONE WOULD EXPECT THAT BLOC REPRESENTATIVES WOULD ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE TO POLITICAL ADVANTAGE CADRES REMAINING FROM ACTIVE PRE-JUNTA COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONS IN THESSALONIKI AND "RED KAVALLA", INsofar AS WE AWARE, THEY HAVE THUS FAR REFRAINED FROM INFERENCE OF INTERVENTION WITH COMMUNIST AND OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES IN THIS AREA. HOWEVER, GREEK OFFICIALS AND OTHERS HAVE REPORTED TO US THAT IN PRIVATE CONGEN SLAVCHEV AND OTHERS SCATHINGLY CRITICIZE U.S. IN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO UNDERMINE AMERICAN PRESENCE HERE.
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